



SUCCESS STORY

IT Skills Lead to Jobs for Disabled

A man with disability turns to help his peers find employment.



Samiul Lavsky with customers at Sungat Studio in Turkmenabat.
Photo: IATP

USAID's Internet Access and Training Program has empowered a leader of a disabled community to open several businesses that employ people with disabilities in one of the cities in Turkmenistan.

Due to the assistance provided by the USAID and IREX internet access and training program, disabled citizens from Turkmenabat, Turkmenistan, are becoming entrepreneurs empowered to obtain the assistance they need.

The USAID-funded program has been offering various computer courses to people with disabilities in Turkmenabat. Among these customers was Samuil Lavskiy, a young man afflicted with cerebral paralysis. Over the last two years he completed basic computing, internet use, graphic editing, and Web design. Through specialized seminars jointly organized by IATP and the Hemayat Economics Association, he also learned about business planning, management, and legal issues related to business operations.

Using the knowledge gained through the USAID-funded courses, in late 2007, Lavskiy worked with local businesses to receive two grants from the USAID Local Development Initiatives Grant Program for community service projects in Turkmenabat. With \$6,625 in funding, they launched the FAN Service Center with 14 jobs for formerly unemployed disabled citizens. The center provides tailoring, shoe-repair, laundering, and hair dressing services for the city's residents.

A year since the successful launch of their first business, a group headed by Lavskiy decided to create new workplaces for disabled. To assess the city's demand for planned services, the group used the resources of the USAID-funded computer and internet center to conduct online research and develop a survey questionnaire. Once the survey confirmed that their planned business should be in demand, Levksiy and his team opened Sungat Studio that provides such services as CD copying and audio-video material processing, and sells music and film products. Four disabled Turkmenabat residents are now employed at Sungat. To hire staff for the Studio, Levksiy turned to the USAID-funded center to produce job application forms.

Using income from Sungat Studio and FAN Service Center, Lavskiy purchased ten walking sticks for people with cerebral paralysis. Lavskiy plans to continue spending part of the business' profits on similar charitable endeavors for his disabled peers in Turkmenabat.